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CONTENTS

- The Fascinating Challenge of Numismatic Research . . . 72
by Q. David Bowers
- Response to Fanning 83
by Pete Smith
- More on Identical Premium-Paid Lists 85
by David F. Fanning
- Collecting Numismatic Literature in the 1960s 87
by David Hirt
- Storer's Numismatic Roots 89
by Frederick N. Dyer
- Book Review: *The Coins of Pontius Pilate* 92
by David F. Fanning



JOHN BETJEMAN

1906-1984

“One of the silliest questions you can ask a book collector is, ‘Have you read all these?’ Of course he hasn’t. Some books are bought to look at, not to read.”

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Letters

Dear Editor,

"Some Notes on Archives," by Q. David Bowers in the Spring 2002 issue, brought back some old memories.

After I retired from the U.S. Army in 1981, I dedicated 18 months of Saturdays to researching Southeast Asian numismatics and related fields from A to Z in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. I started every morning with about 20 request forms for books from the stacks. Each day, I tried to scan all of the books, and photocopy the relevant pages with their title and copyright page. But I often had to return some books before closing time and hope to get them back on the next Saturday morning.

At that time, Will Tuchrello was the curator of Southeast Asian material. He observed me for a couple of months and one day offered me a researcher's desk and bookcase where I could keep all of my books until I was done with them. This greatly assisted me because some books were always sitting there when I arrived in the morning. I did not have to waste time waiting for them to come up from the stacks, and I eventually did see everything from A to Z! Will is now the Director of the Library of Congress for Southeast Asia and based in Jakarta, Indonesia. He greatly deserved the promotion and many of us will miss him when he retires in a few years.

As I went through the books at the Library of Congress, I discovered that many of the English-language books with my Southeast Asian information and illustrations in them were missing pages. They were very neatly cut out so it would not be noticed. I was outraged. At that time, there were only two or three other numismatists who would have an interest in those pages, and I still have a strong feeling I know who cut out those pages.

During my search, I also discovered several very rare editions in the stacks and requested they be moved to the rare books section, where they could be more closely guarded. Will had this done and hopefully no one has damaged these books. I have made this request at several other libraries around the U.S. and many of my requests were not heeded. When I returned to one library at a prominent Pennsylvania university, a rare French-language Vietnamese-Latin dictionary written by a Catholic priest was missing, two years after I requested it be placed in the rare books section.

As a result of some research, I discovered that a U.S. Navy Lieutenant named Smith made an official visit to Viet Nam in 1819-1820. This was at the time when Emperor Gia Long died and Emperor Minh Mang replaced him. In the report I read, Smith returned with many Vietnamese objects, including coins and bullion bars, which he

donated to what eventually became a prominent museum in Massachusetts. I wrote a letter to the museum with a list of the items and requested an appointment for me to look at them. The answer I received was that when they went to the drawer identified as holding the pieces, it was empty. No one had officially gone to that drawer in over 30 years, so they had no idea when they disappeared.

Those of us who respect books and numismatic pieces that belong to ourselves, others, and the public need to assist owners in preserving them when we see a need for such action. When you see a book or piece which needs to be secured, please talk to the librarian or curator and request that it be placed in a more secure environment.

Howard A. Daniel III

New Members

BAUMANN, Hans D. — Santiago, Chile
 GEO, Rusty — Reno, NV
 HOLCOMB, Eric — Kent, WA
 TREMMEL, George — Raleigh, NC
 WILLIAMS, Ray — Trenton, NJ

The Fascinating Challenge of Numismatic Research

By Q. David Bowers*

Introduction

I love numismatic literature and, although I'm a coin dealer, as most of you know, when it comes to research and coins, the more obscure the better. I really do like proof Double Eagles and I like all the rarities, but if someone shows me a token or a medal I have never seen before I'll stop, look and make notes.

First of all, in my opinion there is no single right way or best way to do numismatic research, nor are past credentials (especially in another field) any guarantee of success in numismatic inquiries. Some people have come into the calling who have never done numismatic research before. A good example is Dan Owens, whose book on California assayers has recently been published.¹ He was not known as a numismatist earlier. I'm not aware that he ever did a numismatic book before, or even

an article, but he created a very creditable, indeed authoritative, book on western assayers up to 1863, a field that had been lightly treated at best. Owens now stands as an example of someone who is a very competent numismatic researcher in the highly specialized field of Western Numismatic Americana. I could mention others. R.H. Burnie, in 1955, published a book on small denomination California gold and never published research before then and hasn't since.² Ard W. Browning all of a sudden "appeared" in 1925 with his book on early quarter dollars and disappeared from the numismatic limelight just as quickly.³

Well Known Research Personalities

I think the father of American numismatic research, in a popular sense, is the late Walter

* On August 10, 2001, Bowers spoke to the Numismatic Bibliomania Society annual general meeting during the American Numismatic Association convention in Atlanta. The following is a transcription of his remarks, with a few additions and corrections by the author.

¹ D. Owens, *California Coiners and Assayers* (Wolfeboro, 2000).

² R.H. Burnie, *Small California and Territorial Gold Coins: Quarter Dollars, Half Dollars, Dollars* (Pascagoula, 1955).

³ A.W. Browning, *The Early Quarter Dollars of the United States* (New York, 1925). Recently, some light has been shed upon Browning's career: see C.R. Herkowitz, "Ard W. Browning through a 1920 Looking Glass," *The Asylum* 15/3 (1997), pp. 8-12; idem., "Ard W. Browning Comes Home," *The Asylum* 18 (2000), pp. 115-123; P. Smith, "Names in Numismatics: A Visit to the Grave of Ard Browning," *The Numismatist* 114 (2001), pp. 410-411.

Breen. Walter came on the scene in 1950 and revolutionized numismatic research by going, at Wayne Raymond's request and expense, to the National Archives and unearthing much information. At the same time, Walter was not alone. Eric P. Newman has won more Heath Awards from the ANA than probably — this is not an exaggeration — the next four runners-up combined.

Eric picks a topic, whether it might be Vermont coins, 1773-dated Virginia halfpennies, or the enigmatic Good Samaritan shilling, and he focuses on the topic, doing a fare-thee-well job, neither looking to the right nor to the left. When he's all done, there is not too much more to be found about the given topic. Even today, in 2001, there is little anyone has added to his published scholarship years ago on these and other topics.

Today, the 1804 dollars are far and away the most famous of American coins from a publicity viewpoint. The standard reference on them is by Eric working with Ken Bressett, who also loves research.⁴ When I was a teenager in the 1950s, I would correspond with both Eric and Ken on various historical and research matters, and the enthusiasm on the part of all of us is undiminished today.

John Ford Jr., in the 1950s, put out "Numismatica Americana," a

short-lived column in *The Numismatist* which even now is fascinating to read. John has done a tremendous amount of numismatic research, combining the rare talent of making things interesting while describing their historical and technical details.

John suffers from the perfection syndrome. I imagine he would be the first to agree that perfectionism is at once excellent, but also frustrating. John has discovered much which remains today stored in his head. Perhaps someday a lot of this will reach final form. For a number of years, I have been tape recording interviews with John, who has been enthusiastic about sharing his experiences of years ago — beginning in the mid-1930s when he was on the cusp of becoming a teenager. Perhaps a book is in the offing!

The same could be said of B. Max Mehl regarding stored knowledge which never reached print.⁵ Mehl was not at all a historian or numismatic researcher, but he had a lot of business transactions, personal experiences, and other things worth sharing, from a career that began circa 1903 and lasted until he passed from the earthly scene in 1957.

I remember having been with B. Max Mehl in the twilight of his life and I had a whole list of questions which I asked him and he answered, and I said, "you

⁴ E.P. Newman and K.E. Bressett, *The Fantastic 1804 Dollar* (Racine, 1962).

⁵ A summary of Mehl's career may be found in P. Smith, *American Numismatic Biographies* (Rocky River, 1992), pp. 160-161.

know so much and you should write all this down," but he never did and today the only thing that anyone can do is look through his advertisements or minutes of ANA conventions to see what you can find.

Walter Breen's Hits and Misses

Returning to Walter Breen, his published findings based on research at the National Archives, in libraries and elsewhere were good and bad, a combination of hits and misses.⁶ The good thing was that he discovered many things that had not been studied by numismatists before. The bad thing was that he committed much to memory. For example, he went to the Johns Hopkins collection in Baltimore and made mental notes. He was a polymath and could make mental notes, but then when he made up a list of, for example — this is a real example — all known original 1827 quarters, he forgot the Johns Hopkins coin.⁷ He just forgot about it. In other instances, he "added" coins to collections that were never there.

And also Walter made a huge number of assumptions and guesses, particularly in the area of mintage figures, restriking activities at the mint, and more.

He would look at a mintage report and if deliveries of coins were made on certain dates, he would say, well then, all in this batch were made from die No. 1, this group is all from die No. 2, and die No. 3 struck precisely 3,245 coins, or whatever. A lot this found its way into the *Guide Book* and now has to be undone. Unfortunately, he did not identify what was a fact and what was a guess.

Also, Walter's reference sources were extremely limited, actually incredibly so. If a coin appeared in a New Netherlands, or Stack's, or Bowers and Merena or Chapman catalogue, it was likely to be cited by him. However, virtually all of the vast repertoire of Thomas L. Elder catalogues — laden with rarities and information — was completely ignored! Similarly, Hollinbeck Coin Co. (the Kagin brothers), Geoffrey Adams, Bangs & Co., and thousands of other auction catalogues were never studied. The published results of Walter's research myopia, once considered to be gospel by the numismatic community, can be rather humorous when read today — check out the rarity comments on Charlotte and Dahlonega Mint gold dollars in his monograph on gold dollars.⁸

Of a politician it was once facetiously said, "I know that

⁶ Breen's career is summarized in Smith (1992), pp. 39-40.

⁷ W. Breen, "A Coiner's Caviar:" *Walter Breen's Encyclopedia of United States and Colonial Proof Coins, 1722-1977* (New York, 1977), pp. 47-48; Breen corrected this error in his *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* (New York, 1988), p. 341.

⁸ W. Breen, *Major Varieties of U.S. Gold Dollars* (Chicago, 1964).

half of what he says is true. The problem is that I don't know which half!" Probably 80% of Breen's theories and assumptions correlate with facts, and 20% do not — but it is taking an entire cadre of modern researchers to separate fact from guesswork.

And I imagine that among much other published historical research, including things that I've done, there are things that can be challenged at one point or another. However, the research of R.W. Julian, who published much information from the 1960s onward, can today be used with a very high confidence level, as he was and is supercareful.⁹ In contrast, on a broad base much of Breen's work might range from assumption to pure fiction, the "Midnight Minters" of 1858 being in the latter category (in my opinion, which, to be fair, invites challenge).

All of this said, Walter Breen deserves a huge helping of credit for creating interest, inspiring others, and blazing the way for modern day scholars. I think all of us in doing anything have to lay a wreath at Walter's grave, figuratively, and say that he opened the area of popular numismatic research.

The Rittenhouse Society

Back about 1955 or 1956, when I was a little kid, I and a few others got the idea for starting the Rittenhouse Society, which came to be formalized, I

believe, in 1960. The idea was that young numismatists, John Kraljevich is a good example today, enjoyed research, but the subject was not all that interesting to older numismatists, particularly dealers. Abe Kosoff was not a researcher, Max Mehl was not a researcher, Abner Kreisberg was not a researcher, and so forth. However, there were a lot of young people who loved research. Grover Criswell liked Confederate currency; Ken Bressett liked Vermont coppers; I liked a little bit of everything (I'm still that way today!), and others had further specialties. We decided that it was good to have a young numismatists society. To join, you could not be more than 30 years old and had to be interested in numismatic research. Well then, several people said, "What about Eric Newman?" What were you, about 31 then, Eric? Anyway he was over the 30 line, so then we dropped the age requirement.

Since then, the Rittenhouse Society has been a fun little group — a number of you in the audience today belong — but the membership is limited by the number of people who can fit around a breakfast table. For years our annual breakfast meeting at the ANA Convention has been an interesting get-together, where a lot of old-timers like Margo Russell, Ken Rendell, and other people that don't show up on the numismatic scene, every once in a while make a trip just for this breakfast. If you are

⁹ Julian's career is summarized in Smith (1992), pp. 131-132.

interested in belonging, you should talk to a member and get on the waiting list or something.

Other Researchers

Returning to research, David W. Akers used the, "Just the facts, ma'am," approach and specifically listed in his memorable series of gold monographs (1975-1982) only the coins he had personally seen, or citations for actual catalogue listings.¹⁰ Thus, today in 2001, the books are still immensely useful, for there are no theories or assumptions that need to be undone.

We also had what Carl W.A. Carlson, who must be included in any listing of numismatic researchers, called "tracking." He wrote an article called "Tracker" for the *ANA Anthology*, a compendium edited by Carl and by Mike Hodder, that went along with the *ANA Centennial History*.¹¹ Basically what Carl did was read through well-known catalogues, such as by B. Max Mehl, Lester Merkin, New Netherlands, Stack's, my own firm's, and so forth, and came up with a list. The result was the creation of a commentary such as: "1873-CC Quarters without arrows at date: Specimen No. 1 went from Collection A to B to C

to D to E."

The only problem with this is that while it is a good jumping-off spot, it is not at all definitive. However, in a relative sense, if Carl assumed that only ten pieces existed of a certain coin, then for sure it is rare. However, whether there are actually eight pieces in existence (as some of Carlson's listings may have been duplicate records of the same coin) or whether there are twenty is not known.

This came home to me recently in a project that Remy Bourne in particular has helped with, that of compiling a database on United States gold coins. I and several helpers are looking through over 10,000 auction catalogs and fixed price lists dating back to the early nineteenth century. I have found countless listings for major rarities that were not recorded by Breen or anyone else in modern times. I guarantee if anyone wants to do the same thing for pattern coins, they will be amazed with all they discover. Ditto for territorial gold.

Treasures in Elder Catalogues

In particular, the earlier mentioned Elder catalogues are a rich

¹⁰ D.W. Akers, *United States Gold Coins: An Analysis of Auction Records*, 6 vols. (Englewood, 1975-1982); idem., *United States Gold Patterns: A Photographic Study of the Gold Patterns Struck at the United States Mint from 1836 to 1907* (Racine, 1975).

¹¹ C.W.A. Carlson, "Tracker: An Introduction to Pedigree Research in the Field of Rare American Coins," in *The American Numismatic Association Centennial Anthology*, ed. C.W.A. Carlson and M.J. Hodder, (Wolfeboro, 1991), pp. 349-364; Q.D. Bowers, *The American Numismatic Association Centennial History* (Wolfeboro, 1991).

hunting ground. Thomas Lindsay Elder put out his first auction catalogue in New York City *circa* 1903. Elder was a very lively person. He was a professional telegrapher who sent to the world in September 1901 the news of the death of President McKinley, who was fatally wounded by an assassin at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. But Elder was a coin person at heart. He started collecting at about ten or eleven and was interested in everything from coins to Indian arrowheads to tobacco tags. Later, in the early twentieth century, he started his cataloguing career. A creature of method and order, Elder was not. He didn't know anything about logical arrangement. He handled a number of famous collections, such as the Peter Mougey sale and in particular the William H. Woodin sale, but he also, as John Adams has delineated in Volume Two of his remarkable study, published 200 or so other catalogues plus many magazines.¹²

Trying to study Elder catalogues is a very daunting task. I spent a week at the ANA library looking through all of theirs, constituting the bulk of what was published. Beyond that, John Dannreuther, a highly competent researcher and fine friend, loaned me catalogues from Harry W. Bass's set, which he had bought at one of George Kolbe's auctions. Others were found elsewhere.

As I've mentioned, I found huge numbers of super rarities in the Elder catalogues. Coiled hair stellars, 1828 over 7 half eagles, large numbers of other very well known things that have never been recorded because I don't think any modern compiler of numismatic information has ever looked through these in minute detail (although John Adams gave a sketch of each). A curious aspect is that an Elder catalogue can say on the cover — and this is a hypothetical illustration — “Beautiful Collection of Gold Dollars,” but somewhere in the back of the catalogue, between two Hard Times tokens will be a gem 1861 dollar completely out of order and not with the main collection. Elder catalogues, more than any other catalogues that I know of, need to be gone through one by one and you can't miss a page. I probably spent at least a month doing this — just for gold coins.

Learning about Colonel Cummings

Let me mention Barney Bluestone. I bought a set of this Syracuse dealer's catalogues from John Adams. I spent two weeks looking through the Bluestone catalogues, which yielded a lot of things. This is another immense repertoire that does not seem to have been studied by Breen.

Remy Bourne recently sent me a couple hundred pounds of weird and obscure catalogs,

¹² J. Adams, *United States Numismatic Literature*, Volume 2: *Twentieth Century Auction Catalogs* (Crestline, 1990).

some by rare coin dealers I had never heard of, and I am just going through them one by one by one. Every once in a while you find something like — again a hypothetical example — the Jones collection of early half eagles sold in Topeka, Kansas, in 1893, that I never heard of before.

The Col. Charles Cummings collection of gold Proof sets, sold by William Hesslein in June 1923, is an example of a generally unknown listing (although Hesslein, not in the mainstream, is better remembered than a lot of early dealers). Since “discovering” Cummings, I have found picture postcards, circa 1906, featuring his spacious lakeside estate, and have learned a lot else about him (one of his steam launches for pleasure rides was called the Rowena, and for music he had a Welte orchestrion in his house) — stuff for a future article, perhaps.

Here we are today in 2001 and I think that the research through old auction catalogs should continue and will yield a lot, especially if they are out of the mainstream. I don’t think you will find much in one of my catalogues or one of Stack’s catalogues or B. Max Mehl’s because they have been pretty thoroughly mined, but there are a heck of a lot of out of the way catalogues that will amply reward anyone with the luck to own or borrow copies and the patience to look through them.

City Directories

Regarding books as a research

tool, my own personal interest is to go beyond numismatic titles. I like numismatic books, but there is not much new stuff to be found in them. Instead, I try to find original source material published decades ago when certain coins and currency were circulating. I have found that very good sources include city directories. However, city directories need to be understood. I probably can discuss city directories as well as almost anyone. Maybe John Ford can talk about them more precisely than I could, but I am not an amateur at it either.

Take as examples the directories that have been published for New York city. I have most of them through 1860 on microfiche, and many originals of later dates. The reliability of the information varies widely, depending on the compiler and publisher — and such change over a period of years. You might see that someone lived at — and I’m making this up as an illustration — 241 Broadway in 1837; that they are not listed at all in 1838; in 1839 they are found at 242 Broadway; after which they are not listed for two years.

You might assume that they might be moving around. The answer is that many New York city directories did not build on previous listings. Compilers sometimes started from scratch. A person living in a given building might say they were at 12 Wall Street one year, 10 Wall Street another year, and 1000 Wall Street sometime else.

I came across something interesting the other day, which I

don't know if it's been recorded among modern numismatic scholars. May 1 in New York City every year was called "Moving Day." In the 1820s and 1830s, many if not most apartments and transient places of occupancy had their leases expire on May 1. That way, everybody had to move at the same time, and as one place became empty someone else could move into it. They don't have that tradition anymore, but there's a big, long explanation of moving day in one of the directories.

This is interesting because if I find in a newspaper, a newspaper being a far more reliable source than a directory, that someone lived upstairs at 277 Broadway in March 1837 and at the rear of No. 2 White Street in March 1838, I can pretty much assume that they moved in May 1837. I try not to say that as a fact but it's a good possibility. A lot of little tidbits like that can be unearthed by poking through old directories. Although a given New York City directory can be quite unreliable, in the aggregate they are very useful. You can look up people like Edward Groh of the American Numismatic Society, or any of the numismatic societies' founders, and you will see just as I said, they move around and the numbers change. Sometimes the names are misspelled, but in the long run you can learn a lot.

In contrast, city of Detroit directories are quite reliable. You can almost print Detroit information from the Civil War as

fact, and so if you just know this, these are excellent and reliable sources, for example for studies on Civil War tokens or banks. The Cincinnati directories are also very good sources of information but Cincinnati and New York directories both do not list company names. If Pete Smith operated the Enterprise Cafe at 212 Fourth Street in Cincinnati, it would say, "Pete Smith, saloon keeper, 212 Fourth Street," but a token for which you seek information might say Enterprise Café with no address. Thus, you would have no way from a directory to associate Pete Smith with it. On the other hand, if you look at a Cincinnati newspaper, which I also collect, it would say Enterprise Cafe, 212 Fourth Street. Matching the type of business and the address, you can now put the two names together. If you match a city directory with a person and newspaper advertisements you can learn a lot.

The S.S. Central America Research

Bob Evans and I gave a presentation at the ANA Numismatic Theatre in Atlanta in 2001 about the Central America. California gold has been a consuming research interest of mine since the 1950s, but this has been greatly accelerated during the past two years. Through the offices of Dwight Manley and the California Gold Marketing Group, an unlimited budget really was given to create a book on California gold ingots and gold coins. At one time we had a half

a dozen people in the field visiting the Huntington Library, the Bancroft Library, the New York Public Library, the Smithsonian Institution and the Library of Congress to get information, and others working at my office. It was really exciting. The fun thing about this particular project is that it was paid for by the ship itself. Amazingly and ironically, the *S.S. Central America* is essentially subsidizing a book about itself!

Edgar H. Adams was the pre-eminent numismatic researcher in the United States circa 1905-1915, and is remembered today for his work on California gold coins and to a lesser extent for his work on patterns.¹³ The pattern text was mainly done by William H. Woodin and Adams took the photographs. For his California gold book, Adams mainly looked at a newspaper called the *Alta California*, "alta" meaning "northern." It was published in San Francisco. I have it on microfilm and consider it to be a very good source.

But beyond that, we found much more. The Library of Congress in its infinite wisdom a number of years ago decided to throw out all of its issues of the *San Francisco Herald* and other Gold Rush era newspapers that were once held for copyright purposes. In a visit there a few years ago with the "chief deaccessioner," he said that it is

much easier to just dump these out, "because we don't have to put them up for bids and, anyway, we don't have the staff to do it."

About a year ago, I came across someone who had acquired all the San Francisco newspapers from the 1850s, and I made an arrangement to buy many of these. Actually, Dwight Manley bought them, and it ran the best part of \$100,000. Beyond the *Alta California*, there were perhaps a dozen newspapers produced during the Gold Rush period with lots of interesting information about gold coins and ingots. There were so many issues that when they arrived at my office, I could look through only a few before sending them all off to Dwight Manley in California. No doubt there are treasures of information therein just waiting to be tapped. In my perusal I came across many nuggets, but hardly all.

I also found out that completely untapped sources of California gold information are crime reports. If somebody in 1852 was robbed in a boarding house, and this happened regularly, the crime report would have given details — such as of a man being robbed of two Baldwin 1851 gold pieces, one \$50 slug, one Spanish so-and-so, and 32 cents worth of miscellaneous copper.

This book has been fun for me, because I've just never had an

¹³E. H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California, 1849-1855* (New York, 1911-1912); E. H. Adams and W.H. Woodin, *United States Pattern, Trial and Experimental Pieces: Being a List of the Pattern, Trial and Experimental Pieces Which Have Been Issued by the United States Mint from 1792 up to the Present Time* (New York, 1913).

unlimited research budget to do anything with and, as I said, the *Central America* is financing its own history. I've tried to, as I often do, ignore common business sense and try to put as much into it as I can. Anyway, I think you will like the result.

What Coins Tell Me

Beyond written and published historical material, in research there are the coins themselves. What can the coin tell me when I look at it? What can an assay ingot tell me? I think this is a relatively new area of research in which someone will look at and analyze a coin to determine what metal it was made out of. "You can see a lot by just looking," Yogi Berra said. Accordingly, by looking at a run of early silver dollars, you can determine whether somebody was a sloppy die maker or a precise craftsman.

In the *Gobrecht Journal* and in the *John Reich Journal*, there have been illustrations and new ideas of how stars were punched. Some seem to have gang punched two stars at a time or three at a time. Things such as the center scribe lines, lathe marks, and misplaced dates are facets being studied now, but which Walter Breen never got involved with in depth, if at all.

Another great area of research that is virtually untouched is the four digit logotype punch. In 1846, to take John McCloskey's recent study example, the Mint made up a four digit punch that read 1-8-4-6. Some punches had tall numbers, others had squat ones, and others were in

between. In the particular year of 1846, coin denominations included the half cent (only in proof format), the large copper cent, the half dime, the dime, the quarter, half dollar, and the dollar. Among gold coins, denominations of \$2.50, \$5 and \$10 were made. The aforementioned date punches were used across the denominations, in no particular arrangement, and no doubt it was fun for Dr. McCloskey to sort them out.

Agassiz and Fish Eyes

Years ago I used to give a class at the ANA Summer Seminar called "All About Coins." That's how Dwight Manley decided to become a coin dealer. He was fourteen years old at the time. Now he is immensely successful, not only in numismatics, but as owner of the United Sports Agency, a management service with many star clients.

In my ANA class I told of Louis Agassiz, the professor of natural sciences. It is said that he gave his students in a zoology class a fish and he said, "I want you to write down all you can about the scales around the fish's eye. When you are done raise your hand."

Three minutes later all the hands were up.

"I want you take another *half hour* and write more."

His students started to see more: the scales were several different sizes and they might have overlapped in different directions, and there were other peculiarities that they did not see in their first three minutes' worth

of observations.

I did this with coins. I asked each student to look at the *Guide Book*, in which three pictures were given for 1794-dated copper cents. I said, "I want you to take twenty minutes and I want you to look at such things as the word LIBERTY, the pole, the date, the 1, the 7, the 9, the 4. I want you to look at Miss Liberty's face carefully. Are all three coins exactly the same?"

This was done, and a spirited discussion always took place afterward. Quite a few students said they had never looked at a coin closely before. I should mention that my friend Bill Fivaz, who has published much about die varieties, has not studied coin history in detail, but has done much great work in examining minute coin details — discovering many exciting things along the way.

I think "what can a coin tell me" offers many research oppor-

tunities. The Internet can help in the sharing of information, and computers can store it. Some have been using computers for a long time — Scott Rubin is an example. Others are new at it.

I think that today, numismatic research, in addition to the traditional numismatic book collecting, is an especially challenging area for NBS members.

I think that there are tremendous opportunities for everybody. There are enough specialties for everybody in this room to have one or a few and not overlap. My gosh, the world awaits a scholar devoted to just the catalogues of Thomas Elder!

We also have the wonderful element of camaraderie. There has never been an instance when somebody in this room, if asked a question, wouldn't help. I think we have good camaraderie, fellowship, lots of opportunity, a fascinating field and a nice journey ahead of us.

Response to Fanning

By Pete Smith

I would like to respond to David Fanning's recent article on "Plagiarism or Cooperation?" (Spring 2002 issue of *The Asylum*) and his discussion of identical premium lists. I had the opportunity to review premium lists in Remy Bourne's collection as I wrote forwards for his books on fixed price lists. As Fanning suggested, I found premium lists "the kind of stuff which even most NBS-types would regard as being little more than curious junk with almost no research value."

I found that many premium lists copied sections, pages, or their entire text from other lists. Some premium lists had a blank space for the company name. Firms could print their name in that space or might use a rubber stamp. I suspect that a complete family tree would show many branches emerging from relatively little root stock.

Although Bourne's collection was extensive, he didn't have everything. There are probably many premium lists with imprints from small firms that are unrecorded in the references. Survival rates for premium lists are low since they were distributed to the general public rather than collectors.

Initially Fanning, Joel Orosz and I could find no record of Bogert and Durbin as a coin dealer. The explanation is simple. Bogert and Durbin was a Philadelphia stamp dealership

and publisher of the *Philatelic Monthly* journal. To find this bit of information, the library that took me 20 years to assemble proved useless, while five minutes on the Internet produced the information I needed.

In his footnote 3, Fanning mentions that "Leon Durbin was primarily a stamp dealer, not a coin dealer." This is not a problem. The premium list included coins and stamps and could be used by either dealer.

I don't believe the Bogert and Durbin list was printed from the same plates as the New York Coin and Stamp list. Photographic processes were frequently used to reproduce copy or illustrations from previous publications. Removing the running head would be easy with film but difficult on a plate.

A close examination of a photographic reproduction will frequently show fuzzy typography and extraneous marks or "dirt" on the pages. It is also possible to use opaque materials to cover pinholes in film and clean up the resulting image. Although it might be possible to identify a photographic copy by examining the lists, the minor differences don't show in the illustrations in *The Asylum*.

There is another mystery. Why did NYC&S Co. have their printing done in Meriden, Connecticut, while Bogert and Durbin had their printing done just three blocks from NYC&S Co.'s

location? Apparently shipping was not a problem with the NYC&S Co. lists shipped back to New York and the Bogert and Durbin lists shipped to Philadelphia.

I would suggest another scenario. Both lists may have been produced from the same original copy. It would be cheaper and more convenient to ship paper originals than to ship printing plates. I suspect, however, that the Bogert and Durbin list was photographically reproduced from the NYC&S Co. list.

What was the economic incentive to publish a premium list? Buying coins may not be the primary incentive. There is evidence that some firms made most of their profit from the sale

of the list. With this in mind, it is interesting that Bogert and Durbin removed the ten cent sale price from the cover.

I don't believe there was a parent subsidiary relationship between the two firms. I suspect they had a casual cooperation and non-competition agreement. The use of a common premium list assured they were buying at the same market levels. Either firm would have been happy to buy wholesale lots from the other.

Fanning's article is the most extensive study that I can recall for a premium list. Perhaps this will open the door for Fanning or someone else to do a more extensive study and to report the results in *The Asylum*.

More on Identical Premium-Paid Lists

By David F. Fanning

At the end of my article "Plagiarism or Cooperation?: Two Identical Premium-Paid Lists of the Late Nineteenth Century," published in the Spring 2002 issue of *The Asylum*, I invited readers who might be able to shed light on the questions I raised to contact me for further discussion. I am very pleased to report that several people have been kind enough to lend their thoughts on the origins and motivations behind the publication of these premium paid lists.

Q. David Bowers suggested the possibility of the lists having been printed from a Linotype or Mergenthaler machine, with each line, including the running heads, being formed as a "slug," which then would be fitted into a frame. He noted that the running heads could have been ground away for anonymous reprinting, which could explain the presence of the partial *p* and the comma — they were simply missed by the person who did the grinding.

The botched dollar sign in the original New York Coin and Stamp Company catalogue, clearly reproduced in the Bogert and Durbin catalogue (as shown in Figures 2 and 3 of my original article), was one of the points which had led me to the tentative conclusion that the original catalogue was photographically reproduced for use by Bogert and

Durbin. Pete Smith, in his response in this issue, agrees that the text was probably reproduced photographically, though he questions the motives behind such reproduction.

In my previous article, I considered the possibility that Bogert and Durbin had reproduced the New York Coin and Stamp Company list with the latter firm's permission (Scenario 3), but decided against this notion as it seemed unlikely for the smaller firm to be affiliated with such a prestigious firm and not make mention of it. At the time, I was thinking of this in terms of the businesses being professional affiliates or partners.

Both Smith and Bowers have made me reconsider this issue in light of the fact that the practice of allowing others to use one's list as a template for their own has a documented history in U.S. numismatics, with Bowers mentioning that Lee Hewitt offered a premium-paid list for sale on the covers of which a company could have their name printed. This arrangement could be of benefit to the original publisher and compiler of the list through either a business deal under which the publishing firm received first refusal on any coins purchased as a result of the list or simply through the sale of the list to the other coin dealer. In other words, the businesses could have an agreement of sorts

without actually being formal partners or affiliates.

As far as determining the identities of Bogert and Durbin, Terry Stahurski located a Philip Bogert as being a consignor in the March 18, 1901 auction sale conducted by Ed. Frossard *frs*. He rightfully points out that the time period of the auction sale makes sense in relation to the presumed time period of the premium paid lists. I had originally suggested (on the advice of Joel Orosz) the possibility of Durbin being Leon Durbin, a stamp dealer of the time. It was Pete Smith, however, who finally determined that Bogert and Durbin were Philadelphia stamp dealers.

Their full names were Rudolphus R. Bogert (1842-1907) and Leonidas W. Durbin (1849-1887).¹ According to Cal Hahn, Durbin was a Philadelphia-based stamp dealer and publisher of the *Philatelic Monthly*, Bogart a New York stamp dealer. Bogert and Durbin were never actually partners except in name. On Durbin's death, his wife took

over the business, merging it with stamp dealer E.B. Hanes. On December 7, 1891, Bogert bought Durbin's share of the business, which then became Bogert and Durbin (though Hanes remained as president of the firm). Bogert retired in 1900. The business retained the Bogert and Durbin name until Bogert's death in 1907.

Bowers, Smith and Leonard Augsburger all suggested that sites of further research would include New York and Philadelphia city directories of the time period and the references of the New York Public Library. Augsburger also pointed out that an index exists for the *New York Times* for the time period — something I did not know. These are all great leads for future research and I hope to have the time to look into this further. At present, uncertainties remain regarding these two lists and their relation. While it no longer seems likely that the Bogert and Durbin list was compiled for fraudulent purposes, its publication remains unclear.

¹ "Intertwining of Philatelic and Social History," available on the Web site of the New York chapter of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society <www.nystamp.org>; Hahn spells Bogert's name "Bogart," but it seems apparent from the philatelic literature that "Bogert" is correct.

Collecting Numismatic Literature in the 1960s

By David Hirt

During the early 1960s, I was immersed in coin collecting. Because I was single at the time and living at home, my expenses were not too high and almost all the money I made was spent on numismatics. The only numismatic book I owned at this time was the *Guide Book*, which I purchased each year. I was bidding on coins in Stack's sales as well as those of Hans Schulman and Abner Kreisberg.

I attended several of those sales in New York city, traveling by train from my home near Philadelphia. I remember that the Schulman sales were held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel

At times, I would notice in the catalogues that the pedigree of previous famous owners of rare coins were given. Most of the rarest colonial coins seemed to have come from the Bushnell and Parmelee collections. I remember thinking "wouldn't it be neat to own the catalogues of these collections so I could check out all those rare coins."

Not long after this, I received the catalogue of Kreisberg's mail bid sale of June 1965. This sale, with over 5,000 lots, had 50 lots of numismatic books and catalogues. One of these was a bound volume of the Parmelee sale. I put in a bid and was successful. So now I had a start in numismatic literature.

In November 1965, Kreisberg

had another sale that had some really rare and desirable books and catalogues, although I did not realize this at the time. There was an almost complete run of large size Chapman sales with plates.

The highest price for these was the Stickney sale at \$235, while the Hunter sale brought \$155. Another rare Chapman sale catalogue offered was the Henderson sale with plates. It realized \$27. I bid \$30 on the Mickley sale which was estimated at \$35, but didn't get it. I was to pay much more for that sale many years later.

Then in November 1966, Hans Schulman had a sale devoted to numismatic literature. From this sale I obtained a volume of Scott's *Coin Collector's Journal*.

The interest in this literature that had been kindled in me burst into full flame in 1968 as I began bidding in earnest. In March, Kreisberg had a literature sale that had some really outstanding items.

I got quite a few nice works from this sale, but one item that I just missed haunts me to this day — an almost complete run of Ed Frossard's *Numisma*. I bid \$97.50 and it realized \$100.

The following month, C.E. Bullowa had a mail bid sale of literature. In this sale, I got a nice partial run of the *American Journal of Numismatics*. In June of

that year, Schulman had another literature sale in which I successfully bid on a number of items.

The year 1968 also saw my introduction to many years of bidding in Frank Katen's sales with my participation in the sale of Floyd B. Newell's library. This was a very large sale, having 3,325 lots. I got a good percentage of my bids.

Since then, my interest has continued unabated in numismatic literature. I have purchased very few coins since I sold most of my collection at auction in 1975 and 1976. Now, however, I am facing that bane of all book collectors — lack of shelf space — so I am trying to control myself. Will I be able to do this? Who knows?

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Storer's Numismatic Roots

By Frederick N. Dyer

David Humphreys Storer, M.D. (1804-1891) was probably the source of interest in numismatics for his son, Horatio Robinson Storer, M.D. (1830-1922), whose specialty was medical medals,¹ and Horatio's son, Malcolm Storer, M.D. (1862-1935), whose numismatic interests were widespread and included naval medals.² At David Humphreys Storer's death, another son, Francis Humphreys Storer (1832-1914), was asked to provide information about his father:

Cambridge, June 27, [18]92
My Dear [Francis Humphreys] Storer,

Can you tell me at how early an age your father took special interest in Natural History? and how it came about that he was one of the original members of the B.S.N.H. (in 1830) and almost immediately its Recording Secretary? So far as I can discover his first interest was in Mollusca, a very natural interest from a boy born on the Maine coast. Any hints you can give me of the early period would be very interesting.

Yours very truly,
Samuel H. Scudder

What follows is the letter Francis provided:

Boston, 28 June 1892
Dear Scudder,

My father entered Bowdoin College when he was not yet fourteen years old. There he came under the influence of A.P. Packard, for whom he retained through life a warm affection and admiration. At that time mineralogy interested him more particularly and he greatly enjoyed Packard's field excursions to mineral localities. He accumulated for himself quite a number of mineral specimens which he gave to me when I was appointed to the institute of technology, in 1865, and which did excellent service there as material for starting the earlier classes in blowpipe work.

His taste for natural objects was by no means confined to minerals. At a very early day, entomology engaged his attention not a little and he gave

1. Horatio Robinson Storer was the author of *Medicina in Nummis* (Boston, 1931), a 1,100 page treatise on medical medals, published posthumously by his son Malcolm. See C. Davis, *American Numismatic Literature: An Annotated Survey of Auction Sales, 1980-1991* (Lincoln, 1992), p. 174.

2. According to Davis, Malcolm Storer authored several works pertaining to numismatics, including: "Admiral Vernon Medals, 1739-1742" *Massachusetts Historical Society*, April 1919, pp. 187-276; *Numismatics of Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1923); "Pine Tree Shillings and Other Colonial Money," *Old-Time New England* 20/2 (1929), pp. 65-86; and *Catalogue of the Malcolm Storer Collection of Naval Medals* (Annapolis, 1936).

popular lectures on the natural history of insects in the days when the custom of giving lyceum lectures first began.

He was interested in birds also, at one time, and he had a large collection of bird's eggs. It was through his example and interest that his young brother-in-law, T.M. Brewer, became a student of oology and ornithology. The taste for collecting extended even to coins. At one time (as he told me) he was in league with all the toll-gatherers on the Boston bridges and they kept for him any odd pieces of money which came to their hands. This coin interest has been handed down to some of his descendants. His son, H.R.S., is today greatly interested in numismatics, and his grandson, John H.S., is curator of coins belonging to Harvard college. I smile daily to see a still younger grandson, Malcolm S., poring over the arrangement of coin collections even as you have done over the remains of shale-invested insects. The coin collecting overlapped and blended with the natural history interests in a curious way — even as archaeology sometimes fuses in with geology — in that he forgathered with the keepers of sailor's boarding houses for the sake of getting specimens of coins as well as of shells and fishes which their clients had brought home.

I doubt if his interest in conchology came in so early as that for minerals and insects

but it was long retained. It was the immediate precursor of his study of fishes. I can myself well remember the time that he was still collecting shells, of which he had accumulated no inconsiderable number. My sisters have just now sent them to Bowdoin College.

I have forgotten just what my father's relations were to the question of his going out as naturalist on the exploring expedition which finally sailed under Capt. Wilkes, but my impression is that the fact of his having only recently been married made him refuse to allow his friends to urge his appointment.

To my mind, it is evident that in his early manhood my father was a good "all around" naturalist, according to the custom — and to the lights and limitation — of that time in this locality. Else he never could have handled the fishes and reptiles as he did when called upon, in 1837, to write the state report; i.e., at a time when he was 33 years old and in active medical practice. Of course, the study of the fishes was the culmination to which the other matters had led up.

It was a great pleasure to my father to have Agassiz call upon him on his arrival in Boston with the remark "my first visit was necessarily to Mr. Lowell who helped to call me hither, but I have come to you directly from Mr. Lowell's house." During Agassiz' residence in Boston and East Boston, hardly a day passed

but someone of the "military family" — Agassiz, Desor, Pour-tales, Girard, etc. — was to be found in my father's house. They dined and tead with us habitually, and we children grew up among them on as familiar terms as if they had been our own relations. All this was broken up by the row with Desor in which my father acted as Desor's friend, though he finally acquiesced in the verdict of "not proven."

Does not this depiction go to show how and why it was that

my father had much to do with the inception of the natural history society?

Truly yours,
F.H. Storer

The letter is now at the Massachusetts Historical Society. I deposited it there two years ago on behalf of Horatio Storer's great-grandchildren, who loaned me a huge number of manuscripts that I used to write *Champion of Women and the Unborn: Horatio Robinson Storer, M.D.* (Canton, 1999).

Book Review

By David F. Fanning

The Coins of Pontius Pilate

By Jean-Philippe Fontanille and Sheldon Lee Gosline

Marco Polo Monographs 4

Softcover US \$26.00; hardcover US \$34.50

This monograph is a highly readable account of the three years' worth of coinage produced under the reign of the most infamous of the Judean prefects, Pontius Pilate (in office 26-36 C.E.; produced coins 29-31 C.E.). The text manages to balance historical discussion with an examination of the numismatic output of Pilate by motif and die variety. The authors' primary accomplishment is in writing a book which can be read by the novice, while being of use to the most advanced specialist in the area.

This is the first published work devoted in its entirety to Pilate's coinage. While the coins are included in the general references on Roman numismatics, Fontanille and Gosline take the topic to another level by examining the coinage — consisting of the fairly crude, rather small bronze prutot (singular prutah) — in a detail heretofore unheard of for this particular issue.

One of the primary successes of the book is in providing the historical context in which the Pilate coins were struck. Far from treating the coins as objects and artifacts only, the authors seem very much aware of the role coins play in the life of everyday people. They approach the sub-

ject both from the perspective of the twenty-first century researcher and of the inhabitant of Judea in the early first century. Historical information is provided in such a way as to satisfy the scholar who may wish to pursue further study as well as the more casual reader looking for a general overview.

The sections of the book concerned with describing in detail the variations to be found on Pilate's coins are well organized and methodical. Sections dealing with metallurgy and the minting process augment the descriptions of coins by die variety in a way which makes pleasurable reading out of what could have been a dry-as-dust catalogue.

The authors' analysis of the primary motifs on the Pilate coins — particularly their analysis of the simpulum and lituus devices — is downright fascinating and gives the reader further insight into an extraordinary part of the world during an extraordinary time.

The text is presented first in English, then in French. I was puzzled, however, by the notice preceding the French text warning that it was not an identical translation of the English. No further information is given,

though differences seem to be minimal.

The main body of the text is followed by three appendices: one concerning the current values and availability of the coins; one on the possible inclusion of images of the coins on the Shroud of Turin (a cloth bearing the likeness of a crucified man, which some believe to be the burial shroud of Christ); and a useful classification table for delineating die varieties. While the second appendix is fairly lengthy, I'll leave any review of its merits to those more interested in matters theological. The other two appendices serve their purpose well, with the classification scheme developed by the authors being of particular value. A bibliography follows.

While the book's text does a good job of providing an overview of its subject as well as a detailed analysis of the individual coins, there are some aspects of the book itself which could use improvement. The softcover volume is very poorly bound, with the covers being of a particularly thin glossy card stock which doesn't hold up to the rigors of a simple reading, much less repeat reference. Anyone considering a purchase is advised to invest in the hardcover

(though I have not seen it and cannot vouch for its binding).

The illustrations used throughout are of varying quality, with full color, high resolution plates included towards the front of the book and lower resolution black and white illustrations throughout the text. The black and white illustrations are useful primarily in giving the reader an idea of to which color illustration to refer – otherwise, they serve little purpose, being of too low a resolution to be especially useful. For some reason, these illustrations are not included throughout the French text.

In the introduction to the volume, Fontanille and Gosline note that in order to compose their text, they found it necessary to combine historical, archaeological and religious approaches to the study of Pilate's numismatic output: "Only by these diverse approaches can we begin to understand the peculiar relationship between numismatic, historical, geographic and religious contexts as expressed by this fascinating body of artifacts." Fontanille and Gosline have done a good job in using all of these approaches in order to develop a highly interesting study.

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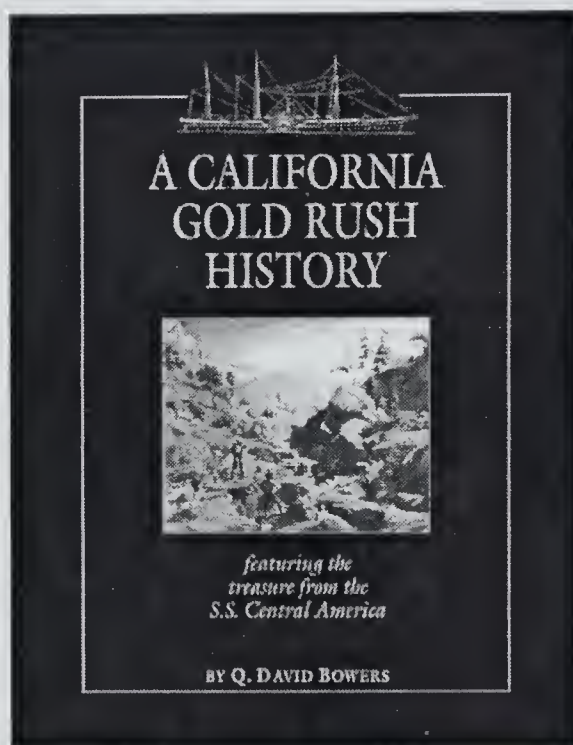
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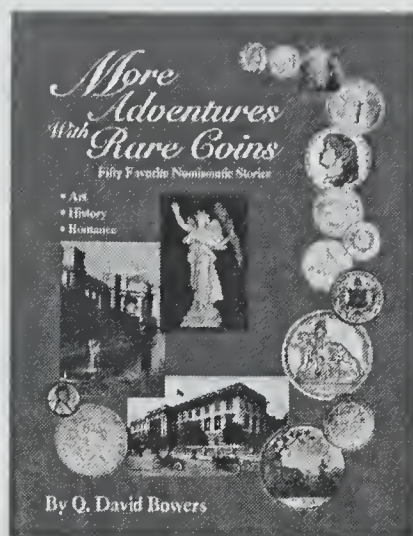
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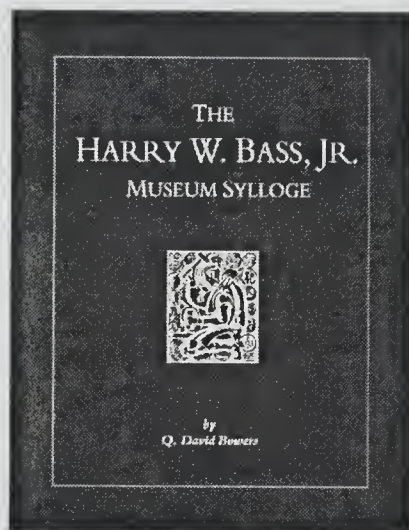


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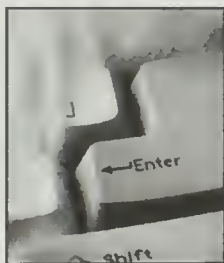
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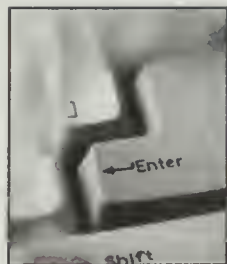
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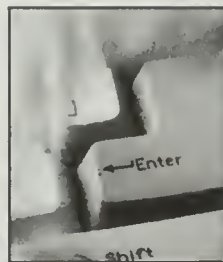
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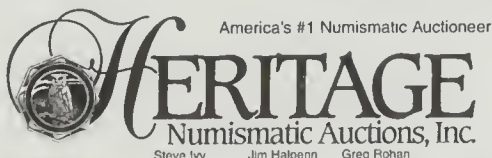
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